

CASTLE REQUESTS ANSWERS FROM U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY REGARDING CRIME IN SUSSEX COUNTY -- June 17, 2008

Asks

Sec. Chertoff for guidance, access to resources for state and local law enforcement agencies

Washington,

DC -- In response

to a recent meeting with several Sussex County law enforcement officials and community leaders about the challenges facing local police departments, Rep. Michael N. Castle (R-DE) today sent a letter to U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Director Julie Myers asking for guidance with respect to the situation in Sussex. The letter highlights the fact that despite the hard work of local law enforcement officials, there are a growing number of criminal cases in Sussex County that are complicated by the involvement of undocumented aliens. As a result, Rep. Castle requested additional resources for training and hiring linguists and victims services professionals. He also requested that ICE be more responsive to Delaware law enforcement officers when it comes to accessing government databases and providing assistance with investigations involving undocumented aliens. Rep. Castle hopes this letter will draw attention to an area of Delaware that is in need of increased law enforcement resources to handle immigration-related crimes such as human trafficking, identity fraud, violent crimes, money laundering, and sexual offenses.

Rep. Castle has authored legislation, the Accountability in Immigrant Repatriation Act (AIR), which would streamline the deportation process and insist that countries repatriate illegal aliens. He acknowledges that many of the issues raised in his letter to Secretary Chertoff may require action in Congress, and he plans to lead the fight to fund state and local police departments as the House begins the fiscal year 2009 budget process this month.

The text of the letter Rep. Castle sent to Sec. Chertoff follows:

June 17, 2008

Dear Secretary Chertoff and Assistant
Secretary Myers:

I am writing to
request your guidance regarding the tools and resources available to state and
local law enforcement agencies in Sussex County, Delaware.

Last month I met
with a group of law enforcement officials and community leaders in Sussex County
to discuss the challenges they are facing when it comes to keeping our
communities safe. Law enforcement officers in this part of Delaware routinely
confront problems such as human trafficking, smuggling, counterfeiting, money
laundering, illicit drug trade, identity fraud, violent crime, and sexual
offenses. While these issues are not unique to Sussex County, they are
amplified by the increased involvement of undocumented aliens.

For example, in
places like Georgetown, Delaware, law enforcement officers routinely investigate
violent crimes that involve undocumented aliens as both the suspects and the
victims. Such investigations are hindered by problems such as the inability to
determine the true identity of those involved and the prevalence of fraudulent
identification documents. Criminal inquiries are also routinely complicated by
language barriers and the undocumented community's fear of alerting public
authorities regarding their immigration status.

Despite the hard work of Sussex County's state and local law enforcement officers, government leaders, and non-profit groups, it is clear to me that additional attention is needed to ensure these individuals have the tools and resources necessary to investigate crimes and keep communities in Sussex County safe. Specifically, I ask that you provide guidance on the following questions:

State and local law enforcement officials across the country have reported a variety of problems with accessing the Immigration and Customs Enforcement databases and soliciting the assistance of federal immigration officials when it comes to verifying the immigration status of aliens. What can be done to improve law enforcement's ability to access information and better utilize ICE resources?

Is there training available to assist state and local law enforcement with foreign language skills, such as tactical Spanish training to improve the communication abilities of law enforcement officers and first-responders?

Are there grant programs available to provide law enforcement departments with funding to hire specialized linguists and victims services professionals to assist officials with investigations?

- Is there additional training available to assist state and local law enforcement with immigration-related activities such as document fraud recognition, cross-cultural issues, and civil rights law?

I realize that many of these issues may require action on the part of the United States Congress and I look forward to working closely with your Department to address such matters in the coming months. I appreciate your timely attention to these questions, which are critical to supporting the efforts of state and local law enforcement officials in Sussex County, Delaware. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Michael N. Castle

Member of Congress

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